

Kentucky State of the Heart 2000

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A Word From The Commissioner

Kentucky's leading newspapers have been publishing increasing numbers of stories about heart disease in women, diabetes, tobacco use, obesity, and other chronic conditions in recent months. These articles note that we cause a substantial part of our misery by how well we do or do not take care of ourselves. High blood pressure, heart attacks, diabetes, kidney disease, and several other conditions are caused or aggravated by how much we smoke, what we eat, and how we exercise. Finally, many statistical reports on the health of the states indicate that Kentuckians are not a healthy lot. That is the bad news.

The good news is that men and women across the state are coming to grips with these issues. This document, *Kentucky, the State of the Heart 2000*, is an excellent discussion of the causes of heart disease and what can be done about it. The statistics indicate that things are not the same across the state. Some areas have more heart disease than others. Why, for example, is the death rate in Anderson County so much lower than the death rate in Wolfe County? Is it the diet? Is it genetic? Is it lack of exercise? Is it tobacco use? How does the death rate from heart disease match with the death rates from diabetes, renal disease, and lung cancer in the high prevalence areas? Are the conditions related? Will interventions to lessen the health and economic burdens of one condition do the same for others? Do local coalitions working to reduce the burden in one disease area have things in common with other coalitions? Can they pool their resources so that $1+1=3$ or more?

Over the next several months, this department in cooperation with local health departments and groups of citizens will work to answer these questions. Grants to support activities to reduce the burden of diabetes, obesity, and tobacco use are coming on line. In time, local initiatives are likely to pull these different groups together to focus on the factors that cause several of these conditions. When that happens, Kentucky will take the necessary steps to improve its health status and we will all be the better for it.

Thank you for your interest in cardiovascular diseases. Please take time in reading this document and then join your state and local public health workforce as together we face the challenge.

Rice C. Leach, M.D.